

Résumé du contenu/English Summary

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RÉSUMÉ DU CONTENU/ENGLISH SUMMARY

Translation : Dorothy Crelinsten

Since the concept of our review was changed in 1975, our editorial policy has been to present the reader with a systematic analysis of society's reaction to crime, particularly in Quebec. Apart from a number of surveys on juvenile delinquency, we have had little opportunity to make a study of the criminal phenomenon itself. There were several reasons for this. Interactionist criticism of the partial, and even biased, nature of the indicators, statistics, etc., on criminality influenced criminologists, many of whom, well aware of the gaps in the criminal records, turned to the reorganization of the judicial data systems. But more than that, criminologists had acquired the status of professionals, extending their sphere of action to the institutions administering justice. « The prevention of crime and treatment of delinquents », the phrase used to describe the criminologist's field, was finally concretized in professional activity that was truly of a criminological nature. This was the field of institutionalized social reaction : the police forces, the courts, prevention and the execution of punishment for both adults and minors. Canada as well as Quebec played a pioneer role in this regard.

This time, we considered it opportune to deal with the subject from a different angle. We examine crime in Quebec, but also, and above all, on a world scale. We felt it important that the majority of our readers who live in a symbiotic relationship with the Quebec reality have contact with the rest of the world and in particular with countries having the same type of post-industrialist society.

An overview of crime, the administration of justice and criminology in their relation to the various types of society is presented in the essay of D. Szabo. Choosing a macro-sociological and comparative approach, the author gives an interpretation of the criminal and judicial phenomena as they relate to economic, social, cultural and political evolution. This cursory examination of such infinitely complex subjects in so few pages is only possible because of simplifications that will be obvious to the reader. However, the author hopes he has suggested a field for reflection.

tion more than one of analysis for criminologists who in their day to day experience rarely deal with problems of this scale.

The article by H.H. Kühne on Japan should satisfy the curiosity of many readers. This is a country that has caught up with, even surpassed, many western countries that have entered the post-industrial era, without having experienced the criminogenic consequences of drastic social and cultural change. The decisive rôle of the cultural factor is clearly seen here and it is this that distinguishes Japanese society from our own. An understanding of the influence, the significance, of values and norms is the key to any comparative study of social or judicial phenomena that are in other respects similar.

I. Waller's article is a notable contribution to comparative criminology. Taking American and Canadian data, the author profits from his knowledge of these two societies, so similar and yet so different in many respects, to point out, with supporting examples, the convergencies and divergencies between the criminality and justice administration in the two countries. Here again, the cultural factor, the communal life experienced and assimilated by the two populations are responsible for most of the often considerable differences.

The results of research on violent crime in Quebec, presented by D. Elie, is the first phase of a comprehensive investigation that will lead the author to explore the epidemiology of crime in Quebec in time and space. His analysis of the data arouses the interest of the reader and, in our opinion restores, if only partially, the confidence of criminologists in the criminal reality as it is conveyed by the statistics. Giving preference to police sources, Elie presents evidence that, because of the proximity of the police to the daily life of the criminal, their reports actually reflect it most faithfully. André Normandeau also presents a résumé of a report on the armed robbery in Quebec *. Armed robbery is perhaps not the most typical crime in Quebec, but is unquestionably a Quebec specialty compared with the rest of Canada and particularly with our neighbour, Ontario.

* Groupe de travail sur les vols à main armée. Rapport sur « Le vol à main armée au Québec », 1980. Gouvernement du Québec, ministère de la Justice, Direction des communications, 245 p.

Finally, the note by J. De Plaen on the type of criminal portrayed in popular literature adds an important touch of colour to the rather austere and abstract contributions contained in this volume. Noting the absence of public censure or taboo concerning the way the criminal is presented or the description of certain crimes, the author calls to mind a series of characters, some sympathetic (Arsène Lupin), others evil (in the writings of Conan Doyle, for example). She wonders about the relationship between what the public wants (curiosity) and what the writer provides. It is good sociology of literature, and we feel it would be well to do more of it in criminology !